

The History Essay (by Patina)

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Summary: Little Joe has to write an essay on George Washington. His first draft is so bad that Adam makes him rewrite it. Ben can't believe the second version got turned in. Read the final version and see if Little Joe finally got the facts right.

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Reviews from the Old Library are on the last page.

The History Essay

Eleven year old Joe had been writing his history essay for at least two hours. Miss Jones had assigned every student a historical figure. He had gotten stuck with George Washington. Joe wished he had gotten John Paul Jones. His Pa had been a sailor so he could have interviewed his father to get an idea of what ship life would have been like for Jones. Oh well, George Washington it was.

Pa was out of town until tomorrow evening, so Adam was in charge. Old bossy boots would want to read the finished essay to be sure that Joe had completed it. Adam had even brought his college history books downstairs so Joe could find information on Washington for the essay.

Joe read through his essay one more time and decided it was

finished. He thought he'd done a really good job on this one and would definitely get an A.

Adam came in from finishing evening chores. He saw that Joe was still sitting at their Pa's desk. Hanging up his hat, Adam asked "Have you finished yet, Joe?"

"Sure have" Joe answered. "Wanna hear it?"

Adam sat down to hear Joe read his essay aloud.

George Washington—An Essay by Joe Cartwright

George Washington never lied about anything. He chopped down a cherry tree. When his ma asked Washington why he chopped down the tree, he said he wanted a cherry pie. So, his ma baked him one and he broke his teeth on the pits. That's why he had to have fake teeth. They were made from the trunk of the cherry tree he'd chopped down. That way, he'd never forget that he'd done something bad.

When he got a little older, he became a surveyor. This meant that he wandered around the woods a lot. He met lots of Indians. They wandered around the woods with him. Washington measured lots of land and claimed it in the name of Thomas Jefferson. Washington thought that would be a good joke. But the joke was on him. People already lived there in log cabins, so Washington couldn't get the deed to any of it after all.

After Washington got tired of living with the Indians, he decided to try farming. He wasn't very good at it. No one can remember anything he grew on his farm. He probably didn't grow tobacco because if he smoked, his teeth might catch on fire.

He used to go to town on Saturday nights. Sometimes, Washington got into fights with other farmers. There weren't any ranches around because people didn't raise cattle. All they ate were deer, squirrels, rabbits, and potatoes. On one trip to town, Washington met Martha. She was a rich widow-

lady. Washington needed money because he lost his farm in a poker game and Martha loaned him money to win it back. She agreed to marry him if he won back the farm. Lucky for Washington, he had a good hand.

After they got married, they moved back to Washington's farm. They didn't have any kids because he remembered what he had been like as a kid. Martha wouldn't be happy if all the trees on the farm were chopped down. Besides, Martha didn't like to bake pies. She was more of a cake person.

Then the French and Indians started a war called the French and Indian War. The French and the Indians fought the Americans. George Washington became a general. He was upset about fighting the French because he wouldn't be able to go to Mardi Gras anymore. Almost all the Indians fought with the French. It was a good thing that Washington had lived in the woods with the Indians all those years ago. He knew all of the shortcuts to the French forts. Because of the war, many of the Indians packed up and moved west. Some are still here today.

After the war, Washington went back to his farm. But it was boring there now. There was nothing to do but plow the fields. Washington might have become the town drunk if there hadn't been a tea party in Boston. He wasn't invited, though. After the tea party, Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence and King George made Washington the General of America. Washington fought the British at every turn. He even had to sneak his men across the state of Delaware to get to Valley Forge. Lots of horses had thrown shoes, so the blacksmiths needed the forge to make new ones. They all crossed at night. It was very cold, so they were able to walk on ice, which was quieter than snow. The British would've heard the Americans if they had been crunching through snow.

Washington finally led the Americans to victory at Yorktown. This was in Virginia, so Washington had to ride fast to get there from Delaware. General Cornwallis surrendered. Then

Washington became President of the United States. He was president for eight years. He had his portrait painted. The painting made him look really old, probably because he wouldn't wear his fake teeth. That's probably why he isn't smiling in the painting.

After being president for eight years, Washington retired to his new farm, Mount Vernon. Thomas Jefferson gave him Mount Vernon as a birthday present. Washington just sat on the porch all day, smoking a pipe since he didn't wear his fake teeth anymore. He died three years after he left the White House because he got sick. Martha told him to put a coat on before he went riding, but he didn't think it was that cold. He was wrong. The doctors tried everything to save him, but nothing worked.

When George Washington died, the whole country was very sad. Even old John Adams cried. Even though Washington had no kids, he's called the father of our country. That's because he thought of everyone as his children.

The End.

Adam could not believe what he'd just heard. He'd loaned Joe all of his college history books so he could find facts about Washington. How could the boy make light of such an important figure in the history of our country?

"Did you actually read through any of the books I loaned you?" asked Adam with disbelief.

"I tried, Adam" answered Joe. "Those books made Washington seem really boring. I know there has to be more to him than what's in those books."

"Joe, you can't turn that report in! Miss Jones will not be amused. This is supposed to be a history essay, not a lampoon of a historical figure" Adam said.

"I have facts in here" answered Joe. "Washington had fake teeth, he was a surveyor, he fought in the French and Indian War, he married Martha, he fought the British in the Revolution, he became President, he retired, and then he died. There's not much else about him other than those facts I just named."

"But you made things up about those facts" countered Adam. "Washington and his men crossed the Delaware River, not the state of Delaware. The Delaware River is on the border of New Jersey. Valley Forge was a town, not an actual forge. The Americans crossed the river at night so they could surprise the British the next morning. How could you get that one fact so wrong?"

"At least I know he had fake teeth" said Joe with a pout.

Adam pinched the bridge of his nose. He couldn't believe that Joe could turn a simple essay into something so horrible.

"Don't you have an essay I can copy?" Joe pleaded, trying a different approach on Adam. As he asked, Joe widened his green eyes. This usually worked on Pa and Hoss.

"No, Joe" said Adam forcefully. "You've got to do this on your own."

"I wish I'd gotten someone interesting, like John Paul Jones" said Joe.

"You probably would've made things up about him, too" said Adam with a snort.

"No I wouldn't've!" replied Joe. "I would've asked Pa what sailing was like so I could write a report about Jones' sailing days."

“Joe, you have to rewrite this essay whether you want to or not” thundered Adam. “This time, you should look through the books I loaned you.”

“But, Adam” whined Joe, “I’ll be up all night if I have to rewrite it!”

“Well, I suggest you get busy” Adam replied.

Joe sat down at Pa’s desk with a couple of Adam’s books. He flipped through one and noted that he had the same facts in his essay as were in the book. Only the book made those facts sound so boring. Well, if boring was what was called for...

George Washington—Father of Our Country by Joe Cartwright

George Washington grew up in the colony of Virginia. His family owned plantations, so he was a spoiled rich kid. History books say Washington chopped down the cherry tree and then admitted to doing it because he couldn’t tell a lie.

As a young man, Washington decided he didn’t want to run a plantation like his father. So, he went to college where he studied math. Then he became a surveyor. Washington’s abilities at surveying were in high demand as people moved to the frontier.

When Washington’s father died, he inherited the family plantation. Realizing he needed a wife, he began courting many of the ladies in the area. One lady named Martha caught his eye. She was a widow with kids of her own. Those kids needed a father, so Martha agreed to marry Washington. They all lived on his plantation in Virginia.

The French and Indians started a war with the Americans in 1756. This was called the French and Indian War. All of the colonies had to raise militias because there was no army. Washington was made a general. He bravely led his men into many battles. At the end of the war, he went home to his

plantation in Virginia.

When the American Revolution began, the American colonies didn't have an army of their own. So, they had to raise one. Remembering what a good leader Washington had been during the French and Indian War, the Continental Congress asked him to lead the new American army. Tired of being a farmer, Washington eagerly accepted.

Washington led the American army in lots of battles. In one instance he led the whole army across the Delaware River, which is in New Jersey, so he could attack the British Army really early the next morning. Afterwards, Washington's army camped at Valley Forge, which was really cold. No horseshoes were made at Valley Forge.

After Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown, Washington went home to his plantation again. He didn't stay there long. In 1788, Washington was elected in a landslide to be President of the United States. The White House didn't exist yet, so Washington had to live in New York. He served as president until 1796, when he decided to retire to his plantation in Virginia.

All of Washington's teeth fell out by the time a painting was made of him as president. His teeth probably fell out because of stress. He had a set of fake teeth made from wood, but they probably hurt a lot.

Washington died in 1799. If he hadn't gone riding in the rain, he probably would've lived a lot longer. The country was very sad when Washington died. Of course, we were only on our second president when Washington died. He's buried in Virginia at his plantation, Mount Vernon.

He helped win the American Revolution and had been the first president. That's why Washington is the father of our country. The End.

Ben Cartwright could not believe the drivel he had just read.

He had met Miss Jones in Virginia City when he was coming back home. She asked him to come by the school house to discuss Little Joe's history essay. When she told him that she couldn't give Joseph a passing grade in good conscience, he certainly understood. He thanked her for taking the time to show the essay to him and he assured her that he would have a long talk with Joseph about taking his writing assignments seriously.

No one was inside when Ben entered the house. He thought that the boys must be finishing up their chores.

Adam walked into the house to find his father sitting at his desk, rubbing his temples. "What's wrong, Pa?" Adam asked with concern.

Ben gestured for Adam to come to the desk. Then he handed Joe's essay to his oldest son. Adam's jaw dropped as he read Joe's rewritten essay.

"Did Joseph ask for your help with this?" asked Ben, hoping that Adam hadn't had a hand in this essay.

"I loaned him my college history books and told him to write an essay based on facts, not suppositions" said Adam.

"You can't expect an eleven year old to comprehend college level books" said Ben rubbing his temples again. "Why didn't you help him with this assignment?"

"I made him rewrite his essay, Pa" said Adam. "You should've read the first one" he added with a derisive snort.

"But did you offer to help him rewrite the essay?" asked Ben, fixing Adam with a look.

"Well no, Pa" said Adam. "Joe's gotta learn to take his

homework seriously. All he had to do was pull the facts out of the books I loaned him and write an essay."

"Do you think that an eleven year old can pick facts out of a college book?" Ben asked with his voice rising. "I am embarrassed that Joseph turned in this load of tripe and appalled that you didn't help your brother!"

Adam felt his temper rising. "If Joe paid as much attention to his school work as he does to his pony, he would be quite the scholar. Instead, you let him do whatever he wants without any consequences."

Ben was going to interrupt, but Adam held out his hand to indicate he wasn't finished. "Joe wanted to know if I had an essay that he could copy instead of having to do the work on his own. By indulging his every whim, you let him think he shouldn't have to work too hard or that someone else will do the work for him. He manages to con Hoss into doing most of his chores and tries to get me to do his homework. It's about time Joe realized there are consequences to his actions."

Just then, Joe came in the house. He was surprised to see Adam's and Pa's faces so red. Joe thought they must be arguing about Adam trying to get out of work by doing useless things like drawing plans for things that wouldn't work anyway. He tried to sneak towards the kitchen, but Ben saw his youngest and yelled "Joseph!!!"

Joe immediately stopped and turned around. Ben got up and came over to him clutching a paper in his hand. "What is the meaning of this?!?" he asked Joe, holding the essay up so Joe could see the large F written by Miss Jones. Joe's eyes grew large and he tried to think of an answer that would lay the blame squarely at Adam's feet.

"I'm awaiting an answer!" Ben said.

"That's my history essay, huh?" said Joe trying to stall for time. Realizing that his father would not be put off, Joe decided the truth would be the better option. "I tried to read Adam's books, but the words were too big. Adam told me to write the facts about George Washington, which is what I did. But I had to fill in the gaps when I couldn't find any facts. I tried to get Adam to help me, but he wouldn't."

Adam turned an even darker shade of red. "I told you to rewrite that essay and include facts about Washington. This time, you had more facts but you still wrote blatant lies. All of Washington's teeth fell out from stress?!?"

Realizing that he couldn't wheedle his way out of this one, Joe turned to his weapon of last resort. Tears started to spill out of Joe's green eyes and his lower lip began to quiver. At that moment, Hoss walked in. He noticed that Joe was crying, Pa looked surprised, and Adam looked really mad.

"What's wrong?" asked Hoss.

"Joe is trying to cry his way out of failing a school assignment" said Adam.

"Oh, Adam" said Hoss, "Lil Joe and I cain't help it if we ain't as smart as you." Ben turned to look at Hoss. "We both try our hardest, but I ain't good with words like you and Lil Joe ain't as good at math as you. Why are ya pickin' on him? Just because you went to college don't make you better'n me or Lil Joe, ya know."

Ben looked like he'd been smacked with a two by four. Joe sniffed as he watched his Pa's and Adam's reactions to what Hoss had said.

"Well, Joseph" Ben finally said, "I suppose you tried your hardest on this essay. After all, you did write it twice."

Maybe if you and Adam sit down together, you can write another essay to be graded.”

“But, Pa” Adam started to say.

“You gave him college level books, Adam” Ben replied. “Therefore, you can interpret what these books say for Joseph. And Joseph, this time don’t take liberties with the facts.”

George Washington—Founding Father by Joe Cartwright

George Washington was born in Virginia in 1732. He had two older brothers. As a little boy, Washington chopped down a cherry tree. Since he couldn’t tell a lie, he told his father that he chopped down the tree, but he didn’t get punished.

As a young man, Washington became a surveyor. He surveyed land in Virginia and elsewhere. Washington also claimed a lot of land for himself, making him very rich.

Washington joined the Virginia militia as a major. He trained his troops just in case war should break out. When the French and Indian War started, Washington was promoted to colonel. He and his men kicked the French out of America. Then he retired.

After the French and Indian War, Washington married Martha and lived at Mount Vernon, his plantation in Virginia. He grew tobacco and wheat because he liked to smoke and drink whiskey. He also represented Virginia in the legislature.

When the Revolution began, America had no army. Washington was named general of the army. On Christmas Eve 1775, Washington and his men crossed the Delaware River to attack the British army in Trenton, New Jersey. They succeeded. The army spent the winter at Valley Forge in Pennsylvania.

After the Revolution, Washington retired to Mount Vernon. He meant to stay there but the new American government decided Washington should run for President. Everyone voted for him,

so he won. Washington served two terms, so other presidents since then have served no more than two terms.

In 1797, Washington retired as President and went back to Mount Vernon. He died two years later because he got sick while riding in the rain. The doctors tried to save him, but they had no luck. Everyone in America was sad when Washington died. He could have been a king by never giving up the office of President, but he knew that would be bad for our country. Along with Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and James Madison, George Washington is remembered as one of the Founding Fathers of America.

The End.

“Hey, Pa! Hey, Adam!” Joe was yelling as he rode into the yard the next afternoon. Ben, Adam, and Hoss came out of the barn to see what Joe was so excited about. Joe had dismounted and pulled a paper out of his saddlebag.

“We got a C, Adam!” Joe yelled proudly.

“A C?!?” Adam asked in disbelief. “How could you get a C when I helped you this time?”

“Well, the essay was still boring, so I had to make some changes” said Joe. “But Miss Jones said my essay was much better this time.”

“Ya done real good” Hoss said to Joe with a wink.

“I’m pleased that you did better this time, Joseph” said Ben. “In the future, though, stick to the facts, no matter how boring they are.”

“I’ll try, Pa” said Joe, beaming proudly and holding his essay. Maybe next time he wouldn’t even need Adam’s help. Maybe next time, he’d get to write about John Paul Jones. Then

he could ask Pa for facts about sailing to add to his essay.

The End.

Reviewer: **Cheaux** Signed

Date: 12 Jan 2013 05:21 pm Title: The History Essay

I liked the first story best . . . liberties or not. It DID contain facts and a lot of imagination! Very creative endeavor, patina.